

Bed Bugs in Apartments and Rentals

May 15, 2014



Pesticide Control Program

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Who is Responsible?

Bed bug infestations are very common in apartments and other rental properties. Bed bug infestations may already exist in a unit, may be brought in by the tenant, or can even migrate through the walls from one unit to another.

Landlords are responsible for keeping rentals in a “fit and habitable condition” (AS 34.03.100), which would include space that is free from insect infestations. However, once someone has moved in to a rental, there is no way to prove where bed bugs came from or who is responsible. This means that each tenant will likely be responsible for controlling bed bugs in their own apartment or rental unit.

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This can really create problems because tenants may not have the desire, knowledge, ability, or resources to effectively address a bed bug infestation. Also, it is impossible to effectively control bed bugs by treating only one unit at a time. Bed bugs can easily travel between rooms in a building, so an infestation in one unit can lead to problems in nearby units.

Even though a landlord may not be legally responsible for the costs of controlling bed bugs, it is probably in their best interest to actively manage bed bugs in order to prevent wide-spread infestations in their properties. Landlords would be wise to develop a bed bug management program and to specifically address bed bug control issues in the rental agreement.

TIPS FOR LANDLORDS

Bed Bug Management Program

Bed bug management should become a part of the regular maintenance program.

- Get training for yourself and staff to recognize signs of bed bugs.



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- Do not require tenants to pay for bed bug control – they will be less likely to report a problem when it is small and easily controlled, they will be less likely to adequately control the problem, and they may choose chemical treatments that could contaminate the apartment.
 - Have a bed bug awareness program for residents; post information on how to identify signs of bed bugs, and instructions for notifying property managers about possible bed bug infestations. Go over this information with tenants in person to make sure they understand.
 - If an infestation is reported, have a bed bug control professional do a thorough inspection to determine the extent of the infestation.
- Work with a pest control professional to address bed bugs in all affected units AND all adjacent units (above, below, and to each side).

Rental Agreement

- It is a good idea to specifically address pest control in the Rental Agreement to clearly spell out rights and responsibilities of the landlord and the tenants.
- Include a stipulation that tenants are required to cooperate with pest management efforts.
- Include a stipulation that tenants will be required to pay for pest control if they neglect to report infestations or fail to cooperate with control efforts.

TIPS FOR TENANTS

Before Renting

- Ask the landlord if bed bugs have been found or treated in the rental or any other units in the building.
- Inspect carefully for any signs of bed bugs before moving in or signing a rental agreement.
- If there is any suspicion that bed bugs may exist in the building, it might be best to choose another location.
- Look for rentals where bed bug control is specifically addressed in the rental agreement, and where the property management has a bed bug program in place. A building that has a specific plan to monitor for and control bed bugs is much less likely to have bed bug problems.

If You Find Bed Bugs In Your Rental

- Contact your landlord immediately to report the problem so that they can work with tenants in surrounding units to monitor for, or work on control of bed bugs.
- Carefully follow the instructions in "[Getting the Bugs Out](#)" to clean and remove bed bugs from your rental.
- Do NOT attempt to apply pesticides or other chemicals yourself.

